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Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition

Taḳiyya

(1,799 words)

(A.), also *tuḳa*ⁿ, *tuḳāt*, *taḳwā* and *ittikā'*, “prudence, fear” (see *L'A*, s.v. *w-ḱ-y*, Beirut 1956, xv, 401-4; *T'A*, x, 396-8), and also, from the root *k-t-m*, *kitmān* “action of covering, dissimulation”, as opposed to *idhā'a* “revealing, spreading information”, denotes dispensing with the ordinances of religion in cases of constraint and when there is a possibility of harm.

The Ḳur'ān itself avoids the question of suffering in the cause of religion in dogmatics by adopting a Docetist solution (sūra IV, 156) and in everyday life by the *hidjra* and by allowing in case of need the denial of the faith (XVI, 108), friendship with unbelievers (III, 27) and the eating of forbidden foods (VI, 119; V, 5). This point of view is general in Islam. But, as Muḥammad at the same time asserted the proclamation of his mission to be a duty and held up the heroic example of the ancient saints and the prophets as a model (V, 71; III, 40; etc.), no definite general rule came to be laid down, not even with the separate sects. Minor questions, which are very fully discussed, are whether *taḳiyya* is simply a permitted alleviation through God's indulgence (*rukḥṣa*) or a duty, if it is necessary in the interest of the community.

Taḳiyya was never rejected even by the extreme wing of the strict Khāridjites [*q.v.*] although among the Azrakīs in the related question of divine worship when danger threatens (*ṣalāt al-khawf* [*q.v.*]), it is often given as an example that one should not interrupt the *ṣalāt* even if his horse or his money be stolen from him during it. The advice is already old: “God gave the believers freedom of movement (*wassa'a*) by *taḳiyya*; therefore conceal thyself!” The principle adopted by the Ibādīs, however, was that “*taḳiyya* is a cloak for the believer: he has no religion who has no *taḳiyya*” (Djumayyil, *Ḳāmūs al-sharī'a*, xiii, 127-8).

Among the Sunnī authorities the question was not such a burning one. Nevertheless, al-Ṭabarī says on sūra XVI, 108 (*Tafsīr* , Būlāḡ 1323, xxiv, 122): “If any one is compelled and professes unbelief with his tongue, while his heart contradicts him, in order to escape his enemies, no blame falls on him, because God takes his servants as their hearts believe”. The reason for this verse is unanimously said to have been the case of ‘Ammār b. Yāsir [q.v.], whose conscience was set at rest by this revelation when he was worried about his forced worshipping of idols and objurgation of the Prophet. It is more in the nature of theoretical speculation, when in this connection the question of *hidjra* is minutely investigated, that in certain circumstances, e.g. threat of death, a Muslim who cannot live openly professing his faith may have to migrate “since God’s earth is wide”. Women, children, invalids and those who are tied by considerations for them, are permitted *muwāfaqa* (“connivance”); but an independent individual is not justified in *taḳiyya* nor bound to *hidjra*, if the compulsion remains within endurable limits, as in the case of temporary imprisonment or flogging which does not result in death. The endeavour, however, to represent *taḳiyya* as only at most permitted and not under all circumstances obligatory, as even some Sunnīs endeavour to hold on the basis of sūra II, 191, has resulted in the invention of admonitory traditions, e.g. *ra’s al-fi’l al-mudārāt* “to be good friends with unbelievers is the beginning of actual unbelief”. To prove that steadfast martyrdom is a noble thing, the story is told of the two Muslim prisoners of Musaylima [q.v.], one of whom allowed himself to be forced to acknowledge the antiprophet, while the other died for the Prophet. The latter is reported to have said: “The dead man has departed in his righteousness and certainty of belief and has attained his glory, peace be with him! But God has given the other an alleviation, no punishment shall fall upon him”.

Taḳiyya is above all of special significance for the Shī‘a. Indeed, it is considered their distinguishing feature, not however always with justice, as Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī in the *Talkhūs al-Muḥaṣṣal* protests against al-Rāzī (see his commentary *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaḳaddimīn wa ’l-muta’akhkhirīn* , Cairo 1323/1905, 181-2). The peculiar fate of the Shī‘a, that of a suppressed minority with occasional open but not always unheroic rebellions, gave them even more than the Khāridjites occasions and examples for extreme *taḳiyya* and its very opposite; even the Ismā‘īlīs, usually masters in the art of disguising their creed, made the challenge to their leaders: “He who has 40 men at his disposal and does not seek his rights is no Imām”. The Zaydīs give as among the number of helpers who remove the necessity of *taḳiyya* from the Imām, that of those who fought at Badr. It is a common polemical charge of the Sunnīs, quoted from the writings of the Shī‘īs themselves, that the latter, as followers of fighting martyrs, are not justified in employing *taḳiyya*, while the Twelvers, in particular, while representing the Imāms as examples compelling one to resoluteness, appeal on the other hand to the conduct of ‘Alī during the reign of the three first caliphs and to the *ghayba* of the Mahdī as examples of *taḳiyya*. Belief is expressed by heart, tongue and hand; a theory of probabilities, developed with considerable dialectic skill, calculates under what real or expected injuries, “the permitting of what is pleasing to God and the forbidding of what is displeasing to God” can be dispensed

with. Observance with the heart is always absolutely necessary. But if it is considered as probable to anyone (*law ghalaba 'alā ḡannihi*) or if he is certain that an injury will befall him, his property or one of his co-religionists, then he is released from the obligation to fight for the faith with hand or tongue.

In Shī'ī biographies, concealment is a regular feature; we are told that the hero broke the laws of religion like the prohibition of wine under compulsion, and this is not always reported as excusable. But since for them also Muḥammad is the Prophet, and since as among the Sunnīs a prophet may not practice taḡiyya in matters of his office, because otherwise one could not be certain of the revelation, we have, in ¶view of the double example of the Imāms, in the code of morals for the ordinary pious men of the Shī'a, the following sayings of 'Alī in juxtaposition: "It is the mark of belief to prefer to practise justice even if it injures you, rather than injustice when it is of use to you"; and as an explanation of sūra XLIX, 13: "He among you who is most honoured before God is the most fearful (of God)", that is, he who uses taḡiyya most (*atḡākum = aktharukum taḡiyyat^{an}*); and it is also said " *Al-kitmān* is our *djihād* ", but at the same time the chapters on *djihād* are to be read with the implied understanding that the fighting is primarily against other Muslims. It is also to be noted that the taḡiyya of the Shī'īs is not a voluntary ideal (cf. Kh^wānsārī, *Rawḡāt al-djannāt*, Tehran 1306/1888, iv, 66-7), but one should avoid a martyrdom that seems unnecessary and useless and preserve oneself for the faith and one's co-religionists.

In any case, because of their attachment to taḡiyya, the Shī'īs have devoted numerous works to it. Ṭīhrānī, in *al-Dharī'a*, iv, 403-4 nos. 1769-83, gives a list of some 26 epistles and other works, including (1) the *R. fi 'l-taḡiyya wa 'l-idhā'a* of Abu 'l-Mufaḍḍal al-Shaybānī al-Kūfī (d. 387/997); (2) the Taḡiyya of 'Alī al-Bakrī (d. 940/1533), of which there is a ms. of 1100/1688 in the library of Sh. Dja'far Āl Baḥr al-'Ulūm in Nadjaḡ; (3) the *R. al-taḡiyya* of Āghā Muḥammad Bāḡir al-Bihbihānī (d. 1206/1791), also with a ms. at Nadjaḡ belonging to Sh. Mashkūr; (4) the Taḡiyya, in 600 verses, by Mu'izz al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ḥillī (d. 1309/1891), of which there is a ms. in the library of Sh. Hibat al-Dīn al-Shahrastānī; etc.

In the last resort, taḡiyya is based on intention, so we continually find the appeal made to *niyya* in this connection. The validity of the profession of faith as an act of worship is not only settled by the correct formulation of the intention to do it, but this is the essential of it, so that it alone counts, if under compulsion a profession of unbelief is made with the lips or worship performed along with unbelievers. God's rights alone can be injured by taḡiyya. He has the power to punish the constrainer, and only in certain circumstances will a slight portion of the punishment fall upon the one constrained. The wiles used in this connection, especially in oaths with mental reservations give, however, ample opportunities to injure one's fellow-creatures.

The moral dangers of taḳiyya are considerable, but it may be compared with similar phenomena in other religions and even among the mystics. The ethical question whether such forced lies and denials of the faith are not still lies and denials of the faith, is not put at all by the one “who conceals his real views”, as he is not in a state of confidence which would be broken by lies or denial.

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